

In the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An oral appliance for maintaining long-term stability of one or more aspects of a user's masticatory system over an extended therapeutic period spanning numerous uses of the oral appliance, comprising:

a first arch adapted to receive at least some of a user's teeth, the first arch comprising an anterior substantially planar region located proximate a midline of the first arch; and

a second arch adapted to receive at least some of the user's teeth, the second arch ~~operable to remain~~ being uncoupled from the first arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period, the second arch comprising an anterior bearing platform located proximate a midline of the second arch, elongated in an anterior-posterior direction, and ~~operable to contact~~ contacting and ~~apply~~ applying a force substantially vertically against an exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position to help maintain stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period;

the anterior bearing platform and anterior substantially planar region collectively adapted to maintain long-term stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system over the extended therapeutic period spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

2. (Original) The oral appliance of Claim 1, wherein the first arch is an upper arch and the second arch is a lower arch.

3. (Previously Presented) The oral appliance of Claim 2, wherein the anterior bearing platform is constructed such that when oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth at least a posterior portion of the anterior bearing platform remains in contact with and applies a force substantially vertically against the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region despite extension of the lower jaw in an anterior direction.

4. (Original) The oral appliance of Claim 1, wherein the first and second arches comprise custom arches customized to fit the user's dentition.

5. (Original) The oral appliance of Claim 1, wherein the anterior substantially planar region and the anterior bearing platform are located in proximity to the user's most anterior teeth.

6. (Previously Presented) The oral appliance of Claim 1, wherein the anterior bearing platform of the second arch is operable to move substantially freely in contact with the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth.

7. (Previously Presented) The oral appliance of Claim 1, wherein:
the first arch further comprises one or more additional substantially planar regions;
and

the second arch further comprises left and right bearing points located distal from the anterior bearing platform of the second arch, each bearing point of the second arch operable to contact and apply a force substantially vertically against an exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of and move substantially freely in contact with the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of a corresponding additional substantially planar region of the first arch.

8. (Previously Presented) The oral appliance of Claim 1, wherein the oral appliance is adapted to help maintain proper positioning of the user's temporomandibular joint over the extended period of time spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

9. (Previously Presented) A method of constructing an oral appliance for maintaining long-term stability of one or more aspects of a user's masticatory system over an extended therapeutic period spanning numerous uses of the oral appliance, comprising:

forming a first arch adapted to receive at least some of a user's teeth, the first arch comprising an anterior substantially planar region located proximate a midline of the first arch; and

forming a second arch adapted to receive at least some of the user's teeth, the second arch operable to remain uncoupled from the first arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period, the second arch comprising an anterior bearing platform located proximate a midline of the second arch, elongated in an anterior-posterior direction, and operable to contact and apply a force substantially vertically against an exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position to help maintain stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period;

the anterior bearing platform and anterior substantially planar region collectively adapted to maintain long-term stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system over the extended therapeutic period spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance;

the constructed oral appliance comprising the first and second arches.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 9, wherein the first arch is an upper arch and the second arch is a lower arch.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 10, wherein the anterior bearing platform is formed such that when oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth at least a posterior portion of the anterior bearing platform remains in contact with and applies a force substantially vertically against the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region despite extension of the lower jaw in an anterior direction.

12. (Original) The method of Claim 9, wherein the first and second arches comprise custom arches customized to fit the user's dentition.

13. (Original) The method of Claim 9, wherein the anterior substantially planar region and the anterior bearing platform are located in proximity to the user's most anterior teeth.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 9, wherein the anterior bearing platform of the second arch is operable to move substantially freely in contact with the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 9, wherein:
the first arch further comprises one or more additional substantially planar regions;
and

the second arch further comprises left and right bearing points located distal from the anterior bearing platform of the second arch, each bearing point of the second arch operable to contact and apply a force substantially vertically against an exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of and move substantially freely in contact with the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of a corresponding additional substantially planar region of the first arch.

16. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 9, wherein the oral appliance is adapted to help maintain proper positioning of the user's temporomandibular joint over the extended therapeutic period spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

17. (Original) A method of monitoring positioning of a user's temporomandibular joint, comprising:

providing an oral appliance comprising a first arch and a second arch each adapted to receive at least some of the user's teeth, the first arch operable to contact the second arch at only an anterior bearing platform of the second arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position to help maintain stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system, the anterior bearing platform being located proximate a midline of the second arch and being elongated in an anterior-posterior direction;

inserting the oral appliance into the user's mouth;

introducing an impression material between the first and second arches;

creating a first impression record using the impression material, indicating that the first arch is operable to contact the second arch at only the anterior bearing platform when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position;

again inserting the oral appliance into the user's mouth;

again introducing an impression material between the first and second arches;

creating a second impression record using the impression material, indicating whether the first arch is operable to contact the second arch at only the anterior bearing platform when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position;

comparing the second impression record to the first impression record; and

if the second impression record matches the first impression record, then determining that one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system have remained stable over a period of time between creation of the first and second impression records.

18. (Original) The method of Claim 17, wherein the first arch is an upper arch and the second arch is a lower arch.

19. (Original) The method of Claim 17, wherein the first and second arches comprise custom arches customized to fit the user's dentition.

20. (Original) The method of Claim 18, wherein:

the first arch comprises an anterior substantially planar region located proximate a midline of the first arch; and

the second arch comprises the anterior bearing platform, the anterior bearing platform of the second arch being operable to contact and move substantially freely within the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth such that at least a posterior portion of the anterior bearing platform remains in contact with the anterior substantially planar region despite extension of the lower jaw in an anterior direction.

21. (Original) The method of Claim 17, wherein the impression material comprises a BLU-MOUSSE material.

22. (Original) The method of Claim 17, further comprising, if the second impression record does not match the first impression record:

determining that one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system have not remained stable over the period of time between creation of the first and second impression records; and

modifying the anterior bearing platform such that the first arch is operable to contact the second arch at only the anterior bearing platform when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position.

23. (Original) The method of Claim 17, wherein the period of time is between zero and sixty minutes and the monitoring is performed in connection with initial fitting of the oral appliance for the user.

24. (Original) The method of Claim 17, wherein the period of time is between one week and fifty-two weeks and the monitoring is performed to determine long term stability of the user's masticatory system.

25. (Original) The method of Claim 17, wherein the oral appliance is operable to help maintain proper positioning of the user's temporomandibular joint.

26. (Original) The method of Claim 17, further comprising:
monitoring the suitability for the user of the oral appliance comprising the anterior bearing platform; and

if the user experiences discomfort or if health and stability of the user's temporomandibular joint are expected to be compromised, providing additional right posterior and left posterior bearing points located distally from the anterior bearing platform such that the first arch is operable to contact the second arch at only the anterior bearing platform, right posterior bearing point, and left posterior bearing point when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position.

27. (Previously Presented) A method of maintaining long-term stability of one or more aspects of a user's masticatory system over an extended therapeutic period spanning numerous uses of an oral appliance, comprising:

providing to the user, for use in maintaining long-term stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system over the extended therapeutic period, a first arch of the oral appliance comprising an anterior substantially planar region located proximate a midline of the first arch; and

providing to the user, for use in maintaining long-term stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system over the extended therapeutic period, a second arch of the oral appliance adapted to receive at least some of the user's teeth, the second arch operable to remain uncoupled from the first arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period, the second arch comprising an anterior bearing platform located proximate a midline of the second arch, elongated in an anterior-posterior direction and operable to contact and apply a force substantially vertically against an exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period;

the anterior bearing platform and anterior substantially planar region collectively adapted to maintain long-term stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system over the extended therapeutic period spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

28. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the first arch is an upper arch and the second arch is a lower arch.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the first and second arches comprise custom arches customized to fit the user's dentition.

30. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the anterior substantially planar region and the anterior bearing platform are located in proximity to the user's most anterior teeth.

31. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the anterior bearing platform of the second arch is operable to move substantially freely in contact with the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein:
the first arch further comprises one or more additional substantially planar regions;
and

the second arch further comprises left and right bearing points located distal from the anterior bearing platform of the second arch, each bearing point of the second arch operable to contact and apply a force substantially vertically against an exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of and move substantially freely in contact with the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of a corresponding additional substantially planar region of the first arch.

33. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 27, wherein the oral appliance is adapted to help maintain proper positioning of the user's temporomandibular joint over the extended therapeutic period spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

34. (Previously Presented) A method of maintaining long-term stability of one or more aspects of a user's masticatory system over an extended therapeutic period spanning numerous uses of an oral appliance, comprising:

during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period, for purposes of maintaining long-term stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system, inserting into the user's mouth a first arch of the oral appliance comprising an anterior substantially planar region located proximate a midline of the first arch; and

during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period, for purposes of maintaining long-term stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system, inserting into the user's mouth a second arch of the oral appliance adapted to receive at least some of the user's teeth, the second arch operable to remain uncoupled from the first arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period, the second arch comprising an anterior bearing platform located proximate a midline of the second arch, elongated in an anterior-posterior direction, and operable to contact and apply a force substantially vertically against an exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period;

the anterior bearing platform and anterior substantially planar region collectively adapted to maintain long-term stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system over the extended therapeutic period spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 34, wherein the first arch is an upper arch and the second arch is a lower arch.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 34, wherein the first and second arches comprise custom arches customized to fit the user's dentition.

37. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 34, wherein the anterior substantially planar region and the anterior bearing platform are located in proximity to the user's most anterior teeth.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 34, wherein the anterior bearing platform of the second arch is operable to move substantially freely in contact with the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth.

39. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 34, wherein:
the first arch further comprises one or more additional substantially planar regions;
and

the second arch further comprises left and right bearing points located distal from the anterior bearing platform of the second arch, each bearing point of the second arch operable to contact and apply a force substantially vertically against an exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of and move substantially freely in contact with the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of a corresponding additional substantially planar region of the first arch.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 34, wherein the oral appliance is adapted to help maintain proper positioning of the user's temporomandibular joint over the extended therapeutic period spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

41. (New) An oral appliance for maintaining long-term stability of one or more aspects of a user's masticatory system over an extended therapeutic period spanning numerous uses of the oral appliance, comprising:

a first arch adapted to receive at least some of a user's teeth, the first arch comprising an anterior substantially planar region located proximate a midline of the first arch; and

a second arch adapted to receive at least some of the user's teeth, the second arch being uncoupled from the first arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period, the second arch comprising an elongated anterior bearing platform located proximate a midline of the second arch, contacting and applying a force substantially vertically against an exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position to help maintain stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period;

the elongated anterior bearing platform and anterior substantially planar region collectively adapted to maintain long-term stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system over the extended therapeutic period spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

42. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 41, wherein the first arch is an upper arch and the second arch is a lower arch.

43. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 42, wherein the elongated anterior bearing platform is constructed such that when the oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth at least a portion of the elongated anterior bearing platform remains in contact with and applies a force substantially vertically against the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region despite extension of the lower jaw in an anterior direction.

44. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 41, wherein the first and second arches comprise custom arches customized to fit the user's dentition.

45. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 41, wherein the anterior substantially planar region and the elongated anterior bearing platform are located in proximity to the user's most anterior teeth.

46. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 41, wherein the elongated anterior bearing platform of the second arch is operable to move substantially freely in contact with the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of the anterior substantially planar region of the first arch when the oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth.

47. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 41, wherein:
the first arch further comprises one or more additional substantially planar regions;
and

the second arch further comprises left and right bearing platforms located distal from the elongated anterior bearing platform of the second arch, each bearing platform of the second arch operable to contact and apply a force substantially vertically against an exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of and move substantially freely in contact with the exposed exterior substantially horizontal occlusal surface of a corresponding additional substantially planar region of the first arch.

48. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 41, wherein the oral appliance is adapted to help maintain proper positioning of the user's temporomandibular joint over the extended period of time spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

49. (New) An oral appliance for maintaining long-term stability of one or more aspects of a user's masticatory system over an extended therapeutic period spanning numerous uses of the oral appliance, comprising:

an arch adapted to receive at least some of the user's teeth, the arch being uncoupled from any opposing arch when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period, the arch comprising an elongated anterior bearing platform centered approximately on a midline of the arch and contacting and applying a force substantially vertically against an opposing surface when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth and the user's temporomandibular joint in its proper natural position to help maintain stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system during each of the numerous uses over the extended therapeutic period;

the anterior bearing platform adapted to maintain long-term stability of one or more aspects of the user's masticatory system over the extended therapeutic period spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

50. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 49, wherein the arch is an upper arch.

51. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 49, wherein the arch is an lower arch.

52. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 49, wherein the anterior bearing platform is constructed such that when the oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth at least a portion of the anterior bearing platform remains in contact with and applies a force substantially vertically against the opposing surface despite extension of the lower jaw in an anterior direction.

53. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 49, wherein the arch comprises a custom arch customized to fit the user's dentition.

54. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 49, wherein the anterior bearing platform is located in proximity to the user's most anterior teeth.

55. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 49, wherein the anterior bearing platform of the arch is operable to move substantially freely in contact with the opposing surface when the oral appliance is inserted in the user's mouth.

56. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 49, wherein:
the arch further comprises left and right bearing points located distal from the anterior bearing platform of the arch, each bearing point of the arch operable to contact and apply a force substantially vertically against and move substantially freely in contact with opposing surfaces.

57. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 49, wherein the oral appliance is adapted to help maintain proper positioning of the user's temporomandibular joint over the extended period of time spanning the numerous uses of the oral appliance.

58. (New) The oral appliance of Claim 49, further comprising an opposing arch adapted to receive at least some of a user's teeth, the opposing arch comprising an anterior substantially planar region located proximate a midline of the opposing arch, the anterior substantially planar region comprising the opposing surface against which the elongated anterior bearing platform contacts and applies a force when the user bites down with the oral appliance inserted in the user's mouth.